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Student election judges sought to quell shortage*By Elizabeth Putnam*

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News and Information

10/8/2008

Students to Train as Election Day Judges

College students are in great demand this election season, and not just because candidates desperately want their votes. Students are also needed to help supervise the use of voting machines on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 4. Maryville University will assist in this effort by serving as a key election judge training site.

The St. Louis County Board of Election Commissioners will train students and other interested individuals on the use and supervision of touch screen voting machines beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 27, in the President's Conference Center, located in Gander Hall on Maryville's main campus. Participants will be certified to work at polling centers throughout St. Louis County as assistant supervisors. Training is free; compensation is \$40 for the training session and \$115 for Election Day work. The work day begins at 5 a.m. and ends after 7 p.m., when the polls close.

Eric Fey, poll worker coordinator for the St. Louis County Board of Election Commissioners, said the county needs 5,000 workers for this year's presidential election - 1,500 more than usual.

"There is a real shortage of poll workers," Fey said. "Recent history shows that it's always a struggle for us to find enough people and it takes a huge expenditure of time, money and effort. This election, we anticipate a heavy voter turnout."

This year marks the first time students and interested others will train at Maryville using the voting machines, which are "new" as of August 2006. In fact, Maryville's campus is the only off-site location to receive such training, Fey said. Because of the logistics of moving cumbersome, heavy voting machines, most assistant supervisory training is done at commission offices, he said.

The election board is pleased to have the opportunity to train Maryville students, Fey said, noting that the technological abilities of young people make them perfect candidates for polling place jobs.

"The value in being able to have college students work the polls is that they are computer-acclimated and easily understand the technology of touch screens," Fey said. "We also use palm pilots to access registered voter data. When folks come into the wrong polling place or they're not listed in the precinct binder, those questions can be answered using the data base. That eliminates a lot of call volume into our headquarters."

The training session at Maryville University comes at the invitation of Marshall King, Ph.D., professor of political science. Several elections ago, King heard a radio report on the shortage of poll workers. He called the election board to suggest Maryville as a training site; because he guaranteed a certain number of student participants, the election commission accepted the offer.

"I'm always looking for something relevant in the real world for my students to do for credit," King said. Students in his seminar course on the 2008 election this semester are required to attend the election judge training.

"The training gives students some appreciation of what it's like to deal with questions about the voting process," King said. "For example, how far can a judge go in helping disabled voters? Can a judge enter the voting booth to help someone, or help a voter out of the car? I want students to meet voters, some who may not see or hear so well. Once they meet them and talk to them, my students will find out there are legitimate questions about the voting process," he said.

Maryville students who are registered voters anywhere in Missouri are eligible to work the St. Louis County polling stations after attending the training session.

Maryville is a partner in the election commission's "At Work for Democracy" program. Participating companies and institutions are acknowledged for encouraging employees and students to serve as poll workers.

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Honor society recruits election judges

Golden Key teams with Election Assistance Commission to recruit students for help at the polls this November

By: Paul Hackbarth

Posted: 10/11/04

To prevent another hanging chads incident in this November, one student organization is trying to get students involved in the election process by offering them jobs at the polls on Election Day. Golden Key International Honour Society, in cooperation with the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), is trying to recruit students as election judges for the November election.

Golden Key set up an information table on the second floor of the Millennium Student Center on Oct. 4 and 5 from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. each day. Students could sign up to work as election judges, who help with the voting process at polling places.

Golden Key and the EAC are working together on a project called Help America Vote College Program (HAVCP). This program aims to hire students as election judges in the city of St. Louis, St. Louis County, Jefferson County and St. Charles County. Students will be paid for their work, as well as for training to learn how to be an election judge.

HAVCP was designed to help with the shortage of election poll judges by allowing college students to work at the polls and assist their state or local government. At the same time, the government benefits from students providing this service.

St. Louis was noted for its problems at the polls in the 2000 presidential election. There was a shortage of election judges in the area, and in some cases, many poll workers failed to show up on Election Day in St. Louis. However, Golden Key and the EAC are trying to make sure that these same problems will not occur this time by having younger students get involved.

According to the EAC, "the average age for a poll worker is 72." Joe Garavaglia, chapter president of Golden Key, and others are trying to get more college-aged students to become judges. The EAC feels that college students would be able to learn the new computerized voting systems easier.

All chapters of Golden Key nationwide are participating in HAVCP, and this is the first year that Golden Key has been involved with the EAC. The EAC was created in 2002, so this is the first presidential election since then. With the help of Golden Key, the EAC is trying to get more election judges by looking for poll workers at colleges such as UM-St. Louis.

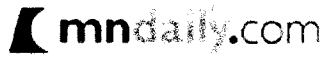
Students were interested in applying for election judges for different reasons. "By being an election judge, students can help the community and make the election run smoothly and fairly," Garavaglia said.

"If you become an election judge, you're more likely to know the process," Daniel Hollander, student government representative and webmaster for Golden Key, said. "If you participate in the process, you're likely to participate in voting and get your friends and family involved."

College students gain many benefits from working as election judges. Hollander said, "We need to support democracy any way we can."

Golden Key recruited about 25 students through sign-up sheets and e-mails. If students are still interested, St. Louis County election judges are still taking applications until the end of October.

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Current judges, whose average age is 70, have a "World War II mentality" and already want to help

their country, Kiffmeyer said.

"I think we have another opportunity here since Sept. 11 to take advantage of that situation and reach out to the younger generation again," she said.

Students can apply by contacting the Secretary of State's Office to request a brochure.

"Being an election judge is a good, tangible way for students to demonstrate their seriousness and their leadership abilities," Martin said.

Elizabeth Putnam welcomes comments at eputnam@mndaily.com

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